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AUTHOR Matthews, Donald R., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

The values, goals, and organization of general education have been highly controversial subjects in higher education for years. Two different perspectives are provided by B. Lamar Johnson's "General Education in Action" (1952) and Miami-Dade Community College's (MDCC's) "General Education in a Changing Society" (1978). Concerns such as technology, value systems, personal social adjustment, career goals, and knowledge of national culture were common to the 1950's and the 1970's. Issues of energy, discretionary time, and lifelong learning gained importance after Johnson's report. In organizing a plan of general education, Johnson proposed defining its purpose, building a structure to achieve the purpose, operating the structure, and evaluating the results. He recommended courses in Communication Skills, American History, Psychology of Adjustment, Family Life Education, Health Education, Creative Arts, and Physical Education. MDCC established specific objectives for its program in categories of fundamental skills, the individual, the individual's goals for the future, the individual's relationship with other persons and groups, and society and the individual. Core courses within the plan were Communications, Humanities, the Social Environment, the Natural Environment, the Individual, and Health Maintenance. Numerous other studies are cited in the report. (AYC)

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PERSPECTIVE: GENERAL EDUCATION AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, 1952-1978

Comparing two reports:
General Education in Action--B. Lamar Johnson
General Education In A Changing Society--
Miami-Dade Community College

Donald R. Matthews, Jr.

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James L. Wattenbarger, Professor

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PERSPECTIVE: GENERAL EDUCATION
AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, 1952-1978

General education and its value have been a highly controversial subject in higher education for years. When the goals of general education and its organization within the curriculum are added, the controversy becomes even more complex. This paper is to review this controversy from the perspective of two reports: B. Lamar Johnson's General Education in Action published in 1952, and Miami-Dade Community College's General Education In A Changing Society, 1978. Each report will be analyzed emphasizing values, goals, and organization.

General education has been a topic of discussion in American higher education at least since the early 1900's. The movement was probably a throwback to the classical, liberal-arts curriculum of the colleges before the Civil War until the end of the nineteenth century when the elective movement and specialization came into being. The general education movement then was first, a reaction to specialization which made electives necessary, caused by the knowledge explosion.[1] Secondly, this surge of new knowledge, especially in the sciences, diminished the status of humanistic learning. "Liberal education and humanistic learning were in many respects equated. With its lesser status, general education

came to be viewed as compensatory to a diminished emphasis on liberal education . . ."[2]. Finally, pragmatism or instrumentalism emerged as a fundamental philosophical position for American life and American education. This made American education instrumental, for the world of work as well as equipping each person to cope more adequately with the general exigencies of life.[3]

The first real evidence of reform came at Columbia University in 1919. A "wars issues" course was adapted to a peacetime course in Contemporary Civilization. It was heavily oriented toward history and advanced the idea that "there is a certain minimum of . . . the Western intellectual and spiritual tradition that a man {woman} must experience and understand if he {she} is to be called educated."[4] Soon, in 1924, the University of Chicago introduced a number of survey courses and organized a program around the important humanistic writings over the centuries, known as the "great books" programs[5] (the program was first introduced at St. Johns University).[6] In 1937, the four-year-college (the former junior college) was established with a complete general education curriculum required of all students. This strong general educational program was introduced by Robert M. Hutchins to invigorate the post-Depression undergraduate program and attract students and financial support. Chicago then became the leading school with a completely developed program of general education.[7]

Similar reasoning prompted other universities: Boston University, The University of Minnesota, Florida, and Michigan State University, to experiment with general education programs. Many of these were similar to the one at the General College of the University of Minnesota that revolved around "problems" or needs of people, individually or collectively, e.g., how to communicate effectively, how to conserve resources, how to maintain individual and public health, and so on. This particular program was a direct outcome of a pragmatic philosophy and an instrumental and utilitarian outlook for learning and knowledge.

The peak of the general education movement probably came with the 1945 publication of Harvard's General Education in a Free Society. Many contend that a shared feeling of national will after the victory of World War II and the onslaught of the Cold War, helped to cause the attitudes of "noble common purpose" at Harvard and led to the publication of this document. President Conant wanted general education to "counter-act the tides of specialization which were beginning to engulf not only students and scholars but the foundations of a free society."[8] Further, the study explicitly stated that " . . . a general education is distinguished from special education, not by subject matter, but in terms of method and outlook . . . . Just as (one regards) the courses in concentration as having definite relations to one another, so should we envisage general education as an organic whole whose parts join in expounding a ruling idea and in serving a common aim."[9]

The general education movement, as mentioned, peaked during this period, 1945--possibly 1960. In a doctoral study by Reynolds in 1945, he concluded that general education had received little or no attention in public junior colleges.[10] This attitude was not prevalent in California during the 1948-49 academic year. It was at this time that the California State Junior College Association initiated the Johnson study on general education sponsored by the American Council on Education. The Director of this study was B. Lamar Johnson of Stephens College. The time was right as well as the location. In 1951, California had fifty-nine public community colleges, of which fifty-seven participated, as well as 53.8% of all public community college students in the nation. The study was concluded with a six-week General Education Workshop held at U.C.L.A. during the summer of 1951. The product of this study, General Education in Action, will now be reviewed emphasizing, as previously indicated, the values, goals, and organization of general education.[11]

In describing the value of general education, Johnson echoes much that has already been mentioned. He sees general education as a counter to over-specialization, the knowledge explosion, the growth of technology, and as a way of bringing together subject matter and forming an organic whole or common aim. He puts his ideas on the value of general education in this way:

> General education is that part of education which encompasses the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed

> by each individual to be effective as a person, a member of a family, a worker, and a citizen. General education is complementary to, but different emphasis and approach from, special training for a job, for a profession, or for scholarship in a particular field of knowledge. [12]

Putting these values of general education into attainable goals was the next task of the study. The following goals of general education were the result:

> Exercising the privileges and responsibilities of democratic citizenship.
>
> Developing a set of sound moral and spiritual values by which he {she} guides his {her} life.
>
> Expressing his {her} thoughts clearly in speaking and writing, and in read- and listening with understanding.
>
> Using the basic mathematical and mechanical skills necessary in everyday life.
>
> Using methods of critical thinking for the solution of problems and for the discrimination among values.
>
> Understanding his {her} cultural heritage so that he {she} may gain a perspective of his {her} time and place in the world.
>
> Understanding his {her} interaction with his {her} biological and physical environment so that he {she} may adjust to and improve that environment.
>
> Maintaining good mental and physical health for himself {herself}, his {her} family, and his {her} community.
>
> Developing a balanced personal and social adjustment.
>
> Sharing in the development of a satisfactory home and family life.

> Achieving a satisfactory vocational adjustment.
>
> Taking part in some form of satisfying creative activity and in appreciating the creative activities of others.[13]

These goals are listed in rank order as indicated by a study of 1,339 students in thirty different colleges.[14]

In organizing the goals of general education, Johnson proposed a four-step plan. Step one is to define the purposes of general education. Step two is to build a structure to achieve the purposes. Step three is to operate the structure, that is to put the structure of the program into action. And finally, the program should be evaluated on the basis of its purposes, which may call for some revision.[15] If Johnson's proposed plan is followed, emphasis will be placed on individual counseling for the students, faculty and student input, a cooperative administration and faculty effort, and constant re-evaluation and revision.

Finally, Johnson's study produces a curriculum that should, according to him ". . . provide and ensure vital student experiences in the following fields and areas. No rank order is implied, all are important: Communication skills, Personal adjustment, Vocational orientation, Family life education, Citizenship, Health, Literature and creative arts, and Natural sciences."[16]

With this model in mind, the study comes up with a recommendation of courses for students:[17]

	Units
Communication skills	3-6 (required by state)
American history and institutions	3-6 (required by state)
Psychology of personal adjustment, including vocational orientation	3
Family life education	2-3
Health education, including science	2-4 (required by state)
Creative arts	3-6
Physical education	2 (required by state)

The recommendations range from 16-28 units, exclusive of physical education. Most colleges would not require the maximum number of units, although at that time, eight required 16 or more for graduation. No specific course was recommended for moral and spiritual values or critical thinking as it was envisioned that these goals would be recognized in all parts of the curriculum including extraclass activity. The same is true for science and vocational courses. It was believed a large number of students would take science courses as a part of the physical education requirements or as a part of their major program. Vocational courses would be geared toward each student's interest and not as a part of the overall curriculum. It can be seen then, that out of the 60 or so units required for graduation, 12-28 units would be from the general education program whether the student was transferring or was in a terminal program.

In addressing the issue of electives versus required courses in general education, the study points out that the median number of state prescribed units is 12. Otherwise, Johnson admits that in comparison to the goals of general education, the graduation requirements of California junior colleges are: 1) diverse, 2) spotty and limited in the

recognition of the broad general education objectives, and 3) fairly uniform by the apparent failure as yet to make any provision for some of the more specific ones. This problem, he feels, can be solved by the advice given by counselors and other staff members on course selection to students.[18]

After the presentation of this study, it was hoped that general education would get a boost in the nation's public community colleges. In 1966, Thornton concluded that after studying the catalogs of thirty public junior colleges, ". . . there is evidence that attention has been paid to the need for general education. . . . More colleges are now making provision for general education than at the time of two earlier studies" [19] (Reynolds, 1945, and Johnson, 1952). He pointed out that nine of the thirty colleges included a statement about general education as one of the purposes of community college students.

Later studies however, such as the one done by Hudson and Smith in 1976, indicate a probable lack of commitment to general education. In their study, 103 catalogs of California's community colleges were analyzed. Most, 86-98%, considered only vocational adjustment, personal and social adjustment, and citizenship as institutional goals. Only 12% cited all of Johnson's goals as part of their own institutional goals.[20] The study concluded that ". . . for all practical purposes general education has been rendered an ineffective part of the student's program."[21]

There is evidence in the Hudson and Smith study that general education programs at the community college level are in decline. This trend though, appears to be throughout all of higher education. Several reasons have been proposed for this widespread decline. The first, and probably the most important, is that the faculty has captured the control of university curriculum and instruction where disciplinary or professional interests and research are emphasized instead of instruction. This has been an influential model for the community colleges, especially the idea of emphasizing disciplinary interests. Secondly, the general education programs became a victim of rigidity. They evolved into hardened courses perceived by students not as important in their own growth and development but as another obstacle or requirement for the degree. Since faculty at major institutions are rewarded for other activities than instruction, the general education programs became outdated, neglected, and even nonexistent on some campuses. These programs lacked usefulness for students who demanded more "relevant" i.e., elective, courses.[22] A typical example is that of Amherst College where the percentage of free electives in the standard undergraduate program increased from 44% in 1966 to 75% in 1975 (up from 15% in 1875).[23]

Since the beginning of the seventies, people at all levels of higher education have again become concerned about general education or the lack of it. This concern has manifested itself by yet another new general education study by

Dean of the Harvard faculty, Henry Rosovsky. Its release in February, 1978, was heralded by some as a "quiet revolution."[24] On the contrary, others point out that first, there is no core curriculum, and second, the new curriculum is not all that radically new. Now, a student's eight general education courses are chosen from more than 800 electives distributed over three broad areas: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Under the new rules, a student will select seven or eight courses from an estimated 100 alternatives distributed over ten areas. This effort may cut down on the number of electives, but as Mortimer Adler recently said, the revised curriculum may be regarded "as some check on the indigestible smorgasbord of the elective system, but it can hardly be defended as a restoration of the truly general education."[25]

At the community college level, Miami-Dade Community College in Miami, Florida, has also addressed the general education problem. Their publication, General Education In A Changing Society, studies the values, goals, and organization of a general education program. As imagined, some of the rationale in this document for general education are the same as in 1950. For example, there is still a concern for over-specialization and the effects of the knowledge explosion. The knowledge explosion problem becomes more evident today when every 40 minutes there is enough new information to fill a 24-volume set of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The U. S. government alone generates 100,000 reports and publishes 450,000 articles, books, and papers annually. On a world basis, 60,000,000 or so pages of scientific and technical literature are published per annum.[26]

Other similar problems include the over use of electives, a basic reading and computation competency problem (more srious now than in 1950), and, as alluded to earlier, the feeling that there ought to be an emphasis on student's communalities and not over emphasize differences.

In addition, an old problem that is even more prevalent today than before, is the technological revolution. Most of what comes from technology is not labor intensive at a time when two million workers are entering the labor market each year. By 1985 the rate of women entering the work force will exceed the rate of men. In addition, 80% of all jobs do not require a college degree. Finally, when one considers that the average American worker will only be working 90,000 hours out of a possible lifetime total of 650,000 to 700,000 hours, discretionary time will weigh heavily.

Another problem concerns third world demands for a new world order. The world has put the developed nations on notice, they will not accept business as usual. Changes will come and future students must be able to adapt.

The last couple of major problems are concerned with raw materials and energy. Much of our raw materials are running out; i.e., forests in certain parts of the world, and we are quickly discovering that our present energy sources

are finite. Future students will be forced to learn how to adapt to ever changing energy consumption and use.[27]

With these problems in mind, a review of Miami-Dade's report is in order. Although Miami-Dade's report does not encompass such detailed explanation as the Johnson report (105 pages compared to 409), this reviewer feels that comparisons can be made nevertheless. As before, the values, goals, and organization of their general education program will be reviewed.

The rationale or values for general education at Miami-Dade are:

> 1. A general education should enable individuals to integrate their knowledge so that they may draw upon the many sources of learning in making decisions and taking action in daily practical situations.
>
> 2. A general education should provide students with a beginning or a further commitment to a lifetime of learning.
>
> 3. A general education should enable students to intensify the process of self-actualization.
>
> 4. A general education should enable students to find value in the activities and experiences of their lives, both those in which they engage because of obligations or commitments and those which are discretionary in nature.
>
> 5. Finally, general education should increase students' understanding of the breadth and depth of ideas, the growth of society and institutions, and the development and application of the scientific process in communities throughout the world.[28]
> (Numbers added by the reviewer)

It is interesting to note here that values 2, 4, and 5 emphasize some points not really faced or not considered too important in 1952. Value two talks about the importance of a lifetime of learning or being able to continually change along with world conditions. This also implies the idea of "learning how to learn". This was not of prime concern in 1952. Value four talks about the use of leisure time constructively. This again was not a major concern in 1952. Finally, in value five, the students are to be exposed to other ideas and parts of the world and attempt understanding, including energy problems. Clearly, values for general education in the seventies and eighties do differ from those in the fifties.

In looking at the goals of Miami-Dade's general education program, several differences are noted as compared to the Johnson report. Goal 1, Fundamental Skills, includes the following specific objectives:

1. The students will be able to speak, listen, write, and read competently and in an organized and critical manner.
2. The students will be able to communicate effectively with individuals in the different aspects of their lives.
3. The students will be able to carry out computations necessary to producers and consumers in society.
4. The students will be able to use systematic, critical, and creative processes, drawing from knowledge of appropriate disciplines, to identify problems, analyze alternate solutions, and make decisions.

Although many of these ideas were mentioned in the 1952 report, the emphasis here and the priority this goal commands is not matched.

Goal Number II, The Individual, has these objectives:

5. The students, based on their knowledge of themselves, will develop capability for self-direction.

6. The students will know the major aspects of the biological, psychological, and social natures of man.

7. The students will be able to do what is necessary to develop and maintain their physical and mental health.

8. The students will develop the capability for making worthwhile use of their leisure or discretionary time.

9. The students will assess the impact of prejudices on their attitudes and behaviors.

10. The students will develop appreciation for and find value in participating in aesthetic and creative activities; they will have knowledge of the major areas of human self-expression, especially as related to the reflection of the human spirit in aesthetic forms and humanistic ideas.

(Goals I and II are the responsibility of all instructors and should be addressed in the appropriate manner in all courses; Goals III and IV should be addressed in all courses where these goals are appropriate.)

Objectives 8 and 9 were not emphasized in 1952 as here.

Goal III, The Individual's Goals for the Future, has these objectives:

11. The students will analyze and assess their personal values and their life goals in order to integrate these with their decision-making.

12. The students will investigate career choices that are compatible with their abilities, interests, and opportunities.

13. The students will set educational objectives in view of their tenative or definite career choices and non-career pursuits.

14. The students will be aware of their responsibility for continued learning throughout their lives.

Although these goals will be addressed both in general education and career courses, faculty with advisement, counseling, and career planning responsibilities have specific responsibility for assisting students in achieving these goals.

Item 14 is new.

The Fourth Goal, The Individual's Relationship with Other Persons and Groups, has stated objectives:

15. The students will know the characteristics of effective interpersonal relationships and will assess their interpersonal skills.

16. The students will apply principles of interpersonal skills in order to make their own human relationships, especially in the family or another primary group, more mutually satisfying.

17. The students will analyze how groups function, within and apart from organizational structures, and will assess their own skills in working with groups.

18. The students will know characteristics of the cultures of other ethnic and racial groups, and will assess their own ability to establish positive relationships with individuals who have different ethnic and racial identities.

Again the emphasis and scope on 18 is not matched by the 1952 report.

Goal V, Society and the Individual states:

19. The students will know and appreciate major accomplishments of various cultures and will evaluate their impact on contemporary society.

20. The students will know significant philosophies and life styles which societies and individuals have adopted and will assess their relevance to themselves and to society.

21. The students will know major ideas and events which have shaped United States society as compared and contrasted with other societies.

22. The students will know the organization and functioning of the United States society and will apply their knowledge of social principles as enlightened individuals.

Objectives 19, 20, and 21 are more complete and widespread than any goals in the Johnson report.

Finally, Goal VI, Natural Phenomena and the Individual, lists these objectives:

23. The students will know the basic components, structures, and functioning of natural phenomena.

24. The students will have knowledge of the philosophy of science and of principles that are basic to scientific inquiry and research.

25. The students will analyze human interaction with the natural environment, will assess the quality of their local environment, and will assume responsibility for their personal impact on the environment.

26. The students will be sensitive to the effects of technology upon the individual, society, and the natural environment.

Objectives 24-26 again are wider in scope and given a more prominent position than the 1952 report.[29]

In organizing these goals, the Miami-Dade plan is to be implemented for the A.A. , A.S., and A.G.S. degrees. Certificate programs will be included, according to one of the authors of the study. The requirements for the basic skills are the same for all degree programs. Each student has to exhibit competency in math, required for graduation, and reading and writing, required for the core communications course. All five of the core courses are required for each degree. The core courses are: Communications, Humanities, the Social Environment, The Natural Environment, and The Individual or Health Maintenance for the A.S. degree.[30]

The exact content of the core courses have not been determined but they will fulfill the stated goals and the core requirements are to be implemented in 1981. Each degree then will have at least 15 required credits from the core

curriculum, 14 for the A.S. degree, out of a total of 62 credits per degree. The core courses are to have large enrollments but instruction will be supplemented by RSVP, a computerized instructional management system.[31]

The Miami-Dade report on general education has some obviously different solutions and plans of action based on different needs than those mentioned in Johnson's report. Some of the differences are in fact a matter of emphasis and not new such as basic skills. As noted, some of the concerns of the fifties are also concerns of the seventies and eighties: technology, value systems, personal social adjustment, career goals, and knowledge of national culture for example. Three major problems faced in the Miami-Dade report, energy, discretionary time, and lifelong learning, i.e., adapting to possible rapid change, were not even mentioned per se in Johnson's report. One very significant difference between the two reports is that the Miami-Dade study sets up a required core curriculum for all degree programs. Although many have said it, including Johnson, Miami-Dade has put into practice the idea that general education should have a common aim and bring together parts to form the whole. This may be the most significant contribution of the entire report.

In conclusion, Theodore Schultz, a University of Chicago economist, set forth the order of obsolesence of what we learn as follows: vocational and job skills, knowledge of

principles and theories, ability to solve problems and develop analytical tools, and the ability to keep learning.[32] General education as exemplified at Miami-Dade in part, proposes to teach learning as a lifelong occupation and to make ". . . survival the prime raison d'etre of . . . education . . . ".[33]

19. James W. Thornton, The Community Junior College (New York), p. 201-2.

20. James Hudson and Ralph B. Smith, "Does General Education Have a Future?" Community College Review, 4 (1976), 57.

21. Ibid., p. 62.

22. Anderson, p. 42.

23. Simmons, p. 27.

24. Ibid., p. 22.

25. Ibid.

26. Anderson, p. 43.

27. Stephen K. Bailey, "Needed Changes in Education," Educational Record, 58 (Summer 1977), 254-257.

28. Jeffery Likenbill and Robert McCabe, General Education In A Changing Society (Dubuque, 1978), p. 31-32.

29. Ibid., p. 35-37.

30. Ibid., p. 57 and 77.

31. Ibid., p. 39, 57, 77, and 83.

32. Anderson, p. 44.

33. Ernest Boyer and Martin Kaplan, "Education for Survival," Change, 9 (Summer 1977), 28.

Footnotes

1. Charles R. Monroe, Profile of the Community College (San Francisco, 1972), p. 69.

2. Lester G. Anderson, "Half a Century of General Education," Intellect, 102 (October 1973), 41.

3. Ibid.

4. Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University (New York, 1962), p. 454.

5. Anderson, p. 41.

6. Adele Simmons, "Harvard Flunks a Test," Harpers, 258 (March 1979), 27.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p. 26.

9. Virginia Lee and John A. Scigliano, "General Education: A College Dropout," Peabody Journal of Education, 4 (July 1977), 253.

10. Monroe, p. 71.

11. B. Lamar Johnson, General Education in Action (Washington, D.C., 1952), p. viii.

12. Ibid., p. 2.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 30.

15. B. Lamar Johnson, "Toward General Education in the Junior College," Junior College Journal, 30 (May 1960), 520-521.

16. Lamar Johnson, General Education in Action, p. 50.

17. Ibid., p. 51.

18. Ibid., p. 49.

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